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Leptospirosis in Cattle

Leptospirosis is a common infection in cattle causing economic loss from milk drop, abortion and infertility.

1. There are two important types of Leptospirosis hardjo.
2. Infection arises from contact with infected urine or products of abortion.
3. Disease is spread most often during spring/summer months while cattle are at pasture
4. Leptospira is not carried by vermin/wildlife
5. Sheep can carry and excrete Leptospira hardjo therefore mixed grazing is a risk factor.
6. Important risk factors: -Open herds
 - Using shared bulls
 - Mixed grazing with sheep
 - Shared grazing with common water courses

Clinical presentation

1. Acute milk drop occurs 2-7 days after infection. The udder becomes soft and flabby with colostrums like secretions or blood-tinged milk in all quarters
2. Abortion may occur 3-12 weeks later- abortions usually occurring in the last 3 months of pregnancy. Infection may also produce premature weakly calves.
3. Infertility; split herd vaccination trials have shown improved fertility parameters.

Management

If buying animals into a disease free herd;

1. Ensure that they are from a disease free herd, although herds that have been vaccinating for a long period of time will rarely have problems with "renal carriers". i.e. some animals after infection with Leptospira will become renal carriers and continually shed the bacteria in the urine despite vaccination.
2. Animals can be injected with dihydrostreptomycin (Devomycin D). Two injections 10-14 days apart will eliminate 95+% of infections.

If buying in animals from a disease free herd into a herd that has already been vaccinated then we would recommend that those animals joining the herd are fully vaccinated before being introduced. If all replacements are homebred and infection has been endemic within the herd than ensure that these replacements are vaccinated fully before going to bull.

Vaccination

We recommend the use of **Leptavoid H** as this vaccine will offer protection against both strains of Leptospira hardjo that we have in this area. The initial course is two injections separated by a time of 4-6 weeks.

Zoonosis

Leptospirosis will affect humans causing severe flu like symptoms. Infection is usually via urine splashes in the milking parlour.